



# Arabian Library, Scottsdale Public Library



The Scottsdale Arabian Library evokes the stark simplicity of a desert canyon. On the interior, Eames Classic products retain that clean timeless quality. The Resolve system furnishes the teen area; and Passage and Ethospace product with Aeron chairs provide good functional support in administrative areas. Herman Miller product also helped the library meet LEED Silver certification.

**EDUCATION/LIBRARY;  
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA**

**Topic:**

*Brand  
Sustainability*

**Application:**

*Internet/Electronic Access  
Library  
Public Space/Lobby*

**Project Scope:**

*11 occupants; 8 workstations;  
20,000 square feet*

**Herman Miller Product:**

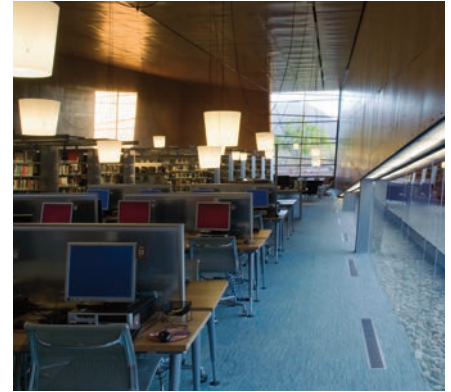
*Ethospace® System  
Passage® Desking System  
Resolve® System  
Aeron® Chairs  
Eames® Aluminum Group Chairs  
Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman  
Eames Molded Plywood Chairs  
Eames Tables  
Nelson™ End Table*

**Program/Service:**

*Easy Options<sup>SM</sup> Capability*

**Year Completed:**

*2007*



Remaining relevant in a wired world is a challenge for libraries, married as they are to old-school media such as books. But some libraries are responding creatively to that challenge by redefining the way they look and function. Rather than sterile repositories, these libraries are invigorating and inviting places where discovery happens in many ways.

The Arabian Library (named for the horse breed) in Scottsdale, Arizona, is a good example. According to Rita Hamilton, director, Scottsdale Public Libraries, this new branch is “truly a desert building. It’s uniquely of its place.”

That place is high desert country with the McDowell Mountains to the northeast. The architecture of the library clearly responds to its natural landscape rather than to the suburban sprawl surrounding it. With towering, slanted walls of recycled, weathered steel that coil around a central desert courtyard, the structure is meant to evoke the experience of the slot canyons unique to the Southwest. “These canyons feel as though the sides are compressing you, and your only orientation is this little sliver of blue sky,” says Kelly Bauer, principal, richard+bauer architecture, llc. “In the library, we tilted walls to give an illusion of that topography.”

With rich walnut paneling and peculiarly slanted surfaces, the interior echoes the theme of a stark, vertigo-inducing canyon. But it also creates a sense of welcome and comfort within that clean, spare aesthetic, and that is what this library is all about. “We’re like the community’s living room,” says Ms. Hamilton, “so our facility has to be multi-functional, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing.”

To meet that range of function and aesthetics, the library drew from an unusual palette. Herman Miller classic pieces—Eames lounge chairs and ottomans, Eames and Nelson tables—are liberally sprinkled throughout the library, inviting visitors to relax and linger. Custom screens from Easy Options shield visitors from staring at each other across the table. Seating is from the Eames Aluminum Group.

“The classics are timeless, and they fit well within this strong, unstylized architecture,” says Ms. Bauer.



Early literacy is a priority for the Scottsdale library system, so the Arabian branch has a colorful, interactive playroom for young children. For the teens, a plexiglass ramp leads into a sunken, denlike space. Teens can hang out in the courtyard or in a private study room. They can watch the plasma screen TV and play the Wii game system. Resolve workstations with canopies and display shelves were chosen for this area “in the spirit of the young adult” to differentiate the space. Also, “Resolve allowed us to stack more elements vertically in this tight space,” says Ms. Bauer.

Behind the scenes, library managers occupy two private offices that are furnished in Passage product, while in the open office area, Ethospace workstations with low frame heights provide functional comfort and contribute to a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. Aeron is the task chair of choice for these librarians.

In another important sense, the library responds to its location by stepping very lightly on the fragile desert ecosystem. All public buildings in Scottsdale must meet LEED Silver certification, so richard+bauer sited the Arabian Library carefully to minimize its footprint and to maximize the advantages of both shade (for cooling) and sun (for daylighting). They used local vendors whenever possible and thoroughly vetted the content of all the materials in the building, using recycled insulation and carpet and wheatboard paneling, for example.

Herman Miller product was an important element in that initiative. Since the 1950s Herman Miller has recognized its mission as “stewards of the environment,” and that ethic is deeply embedded in its products, processes, and facilities. So, from the packaging to the product, the library could trust that Herman Miller product would meet high environmental standards. “Our missions are aligned, so we make good partners,” says Ms. Hamilton.

In addition to high recycled content, many of the Herman Miller products in the library also have GREENGUARD® certification for low emissions. Custom bamboo veneer for the Eames tables was a sustainable Easy Options choice as well.

As this desert building expands the scope and purpose of a library while respecting the natural world that surrounds it, Herman Miller product quietly supports both efforts.

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